The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. A method for performing a database search concerning social relations of a first entity, comprising:

(a) in response to a search request received from a search requester, the search request containing identification of a first entity, extracting explicit relations concerning the first entity; and

(b) extracting implicit relations concerning the first entity based on the extracted explicit relations.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the explicit and implicit relations are extracted based on a search level received from the search requester.

3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

(a) formatting the extracted explicit and implicit relations; and

(b) sending the formatted explicit and implicit relations to the search requester.

4. The method of Claim 1, which is implemented over a network, wherein the explicit and implicit relations concerning the first entity are obtained from a social-relationship database coupled to the network.

5. The method of Claim 4, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

6. The method of Claim 1, wherein the search request further contains identification of a second entity, and explicit and implicit relations between the first and second identified entities are extracted.

7. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of Claim 1.

8. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of Claim 2.

9. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of Claim 3.

10. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of Claim 4.

11. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of Claim 5.

12. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of Claim 6.

13. An apparatus for performing a database search concerning social relations of a first entity, comprising:

(a) a processing unit; and

(b) a storage medium coupled to the processing unit, the storage medium storing program code implemented by the processing unit for performing the steps of:

(i) in response to a search request received from a search requester, the search request containing identification of a first entity, extracting explicit relations concerning the first entity; and

(ii) extracting implicit relations concerning the first entity based on the extracted explicit relations.

14. The apparatus of Claim 13, wherein the program code implemented by the processing unit further performs the step of receiving a search level from the search requester, and in steps (b)(i) and (b)(ii) the explicit and implicit relations concerning the first entity are extracted based on the received search level.

15. The apparatus of Claim 13, wherein the program code implemented by the processing unit further performs the steps of:

(a) formatting the extracted explicit and implicit relations; and

(b) sending the formatted explicit and implicit relations to the search requester.

16.   The apparatus of Claim 13, which is connected to a network, wherein the explicit and implicit relations concerning the first entity are obtained from a social-relationship database that is also connected to the network.

17.   The apparatus of Claim 16, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

18.   The apparatus of Claim 13, wherein the program code implemented by the processing unit further performs the step of receiving identification of a second entity from the search requester, and in steps (b)(i) and (b)(ii) the explicit and implicit relations between the first and second entities are extracted.